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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - UN - KOFI ANNAN AND FOOD FOR
OIL CONTROVERSY
PARIS - WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

UN - KOFI ANNAN AND FOOD FOR OIL CONTROVERSY

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

DOMESTIC POLITICS DOMINATE TODAY'S FRONT PAGES, WITH SEVERAL
REPORTS, POLLS AND OPINION COLUMNS STILL BEING DEVOTED TO THE
EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION AND THE TREND IN FRANCE IN SUPPORT OF
THE "NO." THE MOST PROMINENT INTERNATIONAL STORY REVOLVES
AROUND KOFI ANNAN, HIS SON'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE 'OIL FOR FOOD'
CONTROVERSY AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE UN.
FOR LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION AND RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO,
ANNAN IS "WEAKENED" BY THE SCANDAL INVOLVING HIS SON, BUT, AS
LIBERATION PUT IT: "PRESIDENT BUSH IS NOT ABOUT TO THROW OIL
ON THIS PARTICULAR FIRE. THE UN REFORMS ANNAN HAS PROPOSED ARE
BEGINNING TO ELICIT SOME INTEREST IN WASHINGTON." (SEE PART C)
IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO, GEORGE MALBRUNOT TITLES HIS
REPORT ON THE HISTORY OF THE 'OIL FOR FOOD' PROGRAM: "IRAQ,
THE WORLD'S GUILTY CONSCIENCE." "IN IRAQ, THE INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNITY ERECTED A UNIQUE HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM IN THE HISTORY
OF THE UN. INDEED, THE COUNTRIES RECEIVING AID WERE ALSO THOSE
FINANCING THE AID PROGRAM. WITH COLOSSAL AMOUNTS INVOLVED. AND
IRAQ, DEPRIVED OF ITS RIGHT TO VOTE AT THE UN, WAS ONE OF THE
MAIN CONTRIBUTORS TO THE UN."

LIBERATION CONTINUES WITH ITS SECOND INSTALLMENT OF JOE
SACCO'S COMIC STRIP RENDITION OF THE WAR IN IRAQ. IN THE
SECOND PART OF HIS INTERVIEW, SACCO SAYS: "FROM WHAT I HAVE
SEEN, I WOULDN'T SAY THE AMERICANS ARE WINNING. WHEN, AFTER
TWO YEARS, YOU ARE STILL SCARED OF GOING INTO A TOWN WITHOUT
AIRCRAFT PROTECTION, IT IS NOT VERY PROMISING. I HAVE SEEN
IRAQI TROOPS BEING TRAINED, AND THEY DO NOT LOOK LIKE A VERY
HIGH QUALITY ARMY. MY FEELING IS THE AMERICANS ARE MIRED IN
IRAQ."

THE ABDUCTION OF THREE ROMANIAN JOURNALISTS IN IRAQ IS
REPORTED, AS WELL AS THE FRENCH PRIME MINISTER'S REMARKS AT
THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY YESTERDAY ABOUT THE FRENCH JOURNALIST
STILL IN CAPTIVITY: "THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT HAS REASSURING
INFORMATION WHICH GIVES US A MEASURE OF HOPE."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

UN - KOFI ANNAN AND FOOD FOR OIL CONTROVERSY

"SUSPICION"

PATRICK SABATIER IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (03/30): "TWO
THINGS ARE CERTAIN. THE FIRST IS THAT THE UN WILL SURVIVE IN
SPITE OF THE CORRUPTION AND FRAUD NOTED IN THE REPORT. THEY
ARE NOT THE FIRST AND WILL NOT BE THE LAST. IN SPITE OF
REPEATED CRITICISM OF THE UN IN THE U.S., THE UN IS MUCH TOO
USEFUL, INCLUDING IN WASHINGTON, FOR THE WORLD'S MAJOR NATIONS
TO LET IT DISAPPEAR LIKE ITS PREDECESSOR, THE SOCIETY OF
NATIONS. THE SECOND IS THAT KOFI ANNAN, WHILE HE WILL NOT BE
FORCED TO RESIGN, IS NEVERTHELESS WEAKENED THROUGH HIS SON'S
DOINGS. THROUGH LACK OF DISCIPLINE, ANNAN IS NOW EXPOSED TO
SUSPICIONS OF NEPOTISM AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST. ALTHOUGH A
MAJORITY OF THE MEMBERS, INCLUDING FRANCE, HAVE GIVEN ANNAN
THEIR SUPPORT, THE UN SECRETARY GENERAL WILL BE HARD-PRESSED
TO OPPOSE U.S. PRESSURE TO BEND THE UN TO AMERICA'S
INTERESTS."

"BUSH OPTS FOR CAUTION"

PASCAL RICHE IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (03/30): "THE UN IS
HARDLY POPULAR IN THE AMERICAN RIGHT. BUT PRESIDENT BUSH HAS
REITERATED THAT HE WANTS A STRONG UN. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UN
AND WASHINGTON HAVE IMPROVED, AFTER THEIR COMMON EFFORTS IN
SUPPORT OF THE TSUNAMI VICTIMS AND THE SUCCESSFUL AFGHAN
ELECTIONS. BUT WITH THE NOMINATION OF JOHN BOLTON AS U.S.
AMBASSADOR TO THE UN, PRESIDENT BUSH IS ALSO SAYING HE SHARES
SOME OF THE FEELINGS HIS FELLOW AMERICANS HAVE FOR THE UN.
BOLTON HAS NEVER HIDDEN HIS CONTEMPT FOR THE UN. STILL, FOR
THE TIME BEING, THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION IS GIVING SUPPORT TO
THE UN AND ITS SECRETARY GENERAL. ONE OF THE REASONS FOR THIS
IS PROBABLY THAT THE REFORMS PROPOSED BY KOFI ANNAN HAVE

FINALLY TRIGGERED A MEASURE OF INTEREST IN THE U.S. ALSO, IF ANNAN WERE TO RESIGN, WASHINGTON WOULD HAVE TO DEAL WITH SOMEONE LESS EASY TO MANEUVER. FOR THE AMERICANS, KOFI ANNAN IS NOT THE WORST CHOICE, AND HIS DESIRE FOR REFORM IS GENUINE." LEACH